

THE GEOLOGIC AGES

Geologists have constructed a time scale divided into eras and periods (see figure 12.2). The primary basis for the delineation of eras and periods is the type of fossil life characteristic of the respective chapters in geologic history. In the same way that historians refer to the "Age of Greece" or the "Age of Rome," geologists refer to the "Age of Fishes" (the *Devonian period*) or the "Age of Reptiles and Dinosaurs" (the *Mesozoic era*).

Some people have been critical of the scientific dating methods discussed above. Sometimes the dating of events changes with more careful research before settling down to some generally agreed upon age.¹ While it is certainly true that the dating of specific events and of fossils themselves is often dependent upon the dating of the geological beds above and below them, the great majority of reported geologic ages are fairly well calibrated and consistent with the vast sweep of geologic history. An expert watchmaker, an artist, or a silversmith will often stamp a date on his work. It speaks of the pride of an expert craftsman. In a similar way, the creation bears the marks of its Maker, with special records in the Earth's crust to allow us a helpful look into the secrets and the wonders of the handiwork of God.

THE SIX DAYS OF CREATION

In the light of substantial evidence that the Earth is indeed billions of years old, the question naturally arises as to why the opening pages of Scripture seem to indicate that the creation occurred in a short span of time. If we believe that Genesis 1 and the scientific account of creation are describing the same historical events, we must deal with the fact that some biblical scholars choose to regard the six days of Genesis as literal twenty-four-hour periods of creation.

While a literal twenty-four-hour day interpretation does not violate the Hebrew language, there is both biblical and traditional support that the "days" in Genesis 1 refer to ages of creation. Biblical support for this view centers on the fact that the Scriptures use known periods of time as metaphors for long, almost incomprehensible time spans. For example, Moses wrote, "For a thousand years in Thy sight/Are like yesterday when it passes by,/Or as a watch in the